

Testimony before the Appropriations Committee on the Governor's Budget

Public Hearing Date: February 23, 2017

Joyce Platz - Fairfield, CT 06824

Senator Formica, Senator Osten, Representative Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Joyce Platz and I am a registered voter in Fairfield, CT.

I am submitting testimony regarding **HB 7027**, An Act Concerning the State Budget, **specifically the proposed "consolidation" cut to the Regional Mental Health Boards, which would in fact eliminate those entities.**

I am writing to you as a Past President and current Board Member of the Southwest Regional Mental Health Board, Board of Directors. I can attest first-hand to the importance of the work of the Regional Mental Health Boards in our communities for some of Connecticut's most vulnerable citizens, those with serious mental illnesses. I strongly oppose the proposed cuts. The mission of the Regional Mental Health Boards is to ensure services are of the highest quality by on-going review and monitoring; that they are available to all persons who need them regardless of ability to pay; advocating on behalf of those impacted by mental illness so that they may have a voice in the development and provision of the services they need and lastly but no less important, working towards reducing stigma, so that no individual or family is ashamed to get the mental health services they need. The proposed cuts by the Governor would totally eliminate this vital advocacy and monitoring arm of our mental health system.

The Regional Mental Health Boards are an important and valuable resource to our local communities. They are the voice of our communities, especially for those who are most vulnerable, the seriously and persistently mentally ill. The Regional Mental Health Boards' work is to empower people and families living with mental health and addiction issues, helping them to advocate effectively for improved services for themselves and others and ensuring that the programs and services funded by the State of Connecticut are effective and efficiently utilize state fiscal resources. Additionally, the Regional Mental Health Boards provide an independent, external assessment of the state-funded programs. This function is vitally important and must be preserved especially, as the likelihood of the state privatizing more services in the next couple of years becomes a reality, it will be extremely necessary to have an outside objective organization to review services and ensure the effective and efficient provision of these services. No other organization in Connecticut provides this independent, community-based assessment to improve the mental health system in CT. The Regional Mental Health Boards also play an important role in our state budget system, by being the conduit to implement and administer the state mental health needs assessment which is a **requirement** of receiving \$23 million in federal funding for our state.

Platz Testimony
Appropriations Committee
February 23, 2017
Page Two

There is not a day that goes by unfortunately that we don't read in our newspapers or on social media or hear on the news reports of a tragedy as a result of mental health issues both in our state and nationally. It is not long ago that our State was so seriously impacted by the tragedy of Sandy Hook, CT. ***That event should continue to serve as a wakeup call to every citizen of Connecticut, and especially our elected officials about the need for expansion NOT ELIMINATION of mental health services, on-going quality reviews of programs to ensure their effective delivery of services as well as on-going training and education for our communities, all important functions of the Regional Mental Health Boards.***

I urge you to restore these harmful cuts to ensure crucial services are available to the residents of Connecticut.

Thank you for your on-going support for services to people with mental health and/or substance abuse disorders.

Joyce Platz
339 Alma Drive
Fairfield, CT 06824